Letter from Taizé

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pages 2 and 3

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Madras

Intercontinental Meeting
27 - 31 December

Property of
Graduate Theological Union
NOV 30 1988

Paris

European Meeting
30 December - 4 January

Summer in Taizé

What were all the people searching for who came to Taizé this summer? There were even more of them than last year. More and more, the meetings have become a time of listening and deepening. One of their essential aspects is to discover the best of what is happening in each continent.

"At first glance, what strikes you is the diversity," a young man from Alsace said, "and I wondered how it could be possible to live in communion with one another. The prayer at the centre of each day, listening to the Word of God, knowing we are all children of God — all that is essential to live in communion. But this year, something else seemed to me to be important: a «human hope». A human thirst that everyone experiences, whatever their background. We can support one another in this hope, and we see to some extent what each person can contribute to others. It is not only because of its diversity that the Church is universal, but also because it is interested in the entire human being, in all the problems of the world, in every human dimension."

This searching was shared each week by thousands of young Europeans from the East and the West, as well as several hundred young people from the Southern continents, coming from eighty different countries. Each day, all those who wished to listen to them came together. Under large marquees, people from each country, one after another, told about their situations, often accompanied by songs and even dances!

The intercontinental meetings this year also prepared new steps forward in the pilgrimage of trust on earth. The Indians, who came from different parts of that country, were able to communicate something of their life and the life of their Church. They began a sharing which will continue in Madras. In listening to them, many realized how important it is to set out to share their lives, even if only for a few days, in Madras and in the region.

For all of them, as well as for the Europeans who are preparing to go to the European meeting in Paris, the questions have become more precise: Can this meeting be a step forward in a life-long pilgrimage? What inner preparation is necessary to make our life a pilgrimage of trust?

This sending out was one of the characteristics of the summer meetings. And the visits by those from the Southern continents to many different European countries will be an important event throughout the autumn. Since groups who came to Taizé were often able to meet those who would be visiting them later on, plans to welcome them could become more concrete.

Leon, from Zaire, told this African story to explain how each person could take part in the pilgrimage, no matter where they are in their searching:

"It is the story of the gazelle and the tortoise. One day the gazelle said to the tortoise:
- What good are you? You are one of the least important animals of the savannah and the forest!
- What do you mean? replied the tortoise.
- You can't even run! In fact, you can hardly walk at all on those four little legs of yours.
- All right, tomorrow we'll have a 100-mile race, and I'll bet you that I'll win!
They made an appointment for the next day. During the night the tortoise contacted all the tortoises of the savannah and the forest. She said to them, «Tomorrow we are going to race the gazelle. We'll line up in single file over the whole 100-mile course. I spoke with the gazelle, so I'll be at the finish-line, and the first of you will be at the starting-line. During the race, if the gazelle asks you, "Tortoise, are you there?" just say "Of course I'm here, I'm running right beside you, let's go."»

The next day, at the hour decided upon, the gazelle was at the starting-line, and so was the tortoise. The gazelle asked:
- Are you ready?
- Sure. Let's go.
The gazelle began to walk and turned to the tortoise:
- Are you still there? Are you following me?
- Of course, everything's fine. Let's go! Run!
The gazelle walked a little faster and asked:
- Are you still there?
- Of course I am. Let's go!
The gazelle began to run fast, and faster and faster, but the tortoise kept on saying, «Here I am; let's go!»
Finally, the gazelle put on speed and went as fast as he could. Out of breath, he gasped:
- Are you there?
- I'm still here; let's go.
Utterly exhausted, the gazelle collapsed at the finish-line. There, the first tortoise called out, «Here I am; I won!»

This story tells about a race we are all involved in. The important thing is not to compare ourselves to others, not to despise or envy the speed of others. Each person can run at the speed given them by God. God gives us all the means to reach the finish-line." □

During the summer months, many Church leaders visited Taizé: Anglican bishops from England and Scotland as well as from Malaysia, New Zealand, and the United States, Catholic bishops from the USA, England and Taiwan, the president and vice-president of the French Bishops' Conference, a Lutheran bishop from East Germany, pastors in charge of the Methodist Church in Britain, as well as bishops from a number of other countries. Some thirty visits in all, throughout the entire summer. Some of them lasted for several days.

Preparing for Madras and Paris

Here are some notes to help develop our reflection before the meetings. It's a good idea to take some time to think alone before sharing one's thoughts in a group with others. As in the last edition of the **Letter from Taizé**, themes from the Letter from Ethiopia are developed here for use in a small group. The preparation will also involve anticipating in a certain sense the meetings at the end of the year by accomplishing at home concrete gestures towards others.

"Wherever you are in the world, in the face of so many people marked by suffering, will you seek the vitality of an inner life so as to be present in the wounds of the human family?" This sentence, with which the Letter from Ethiopia begins, explains the essential of the pilgrimage of trust: seeking at the wellsprings of trust in God a vitality which will lead us to be creators of communion even in situations of suffering, be they far away or close at hand.

Here are some areas on which we can begin thinking: How, as we set out for Paris or Madras, can we be pilgrims in the true meaning of the term? Sent by our group or local church, can we be in solidarity with the human family near at hand and far away? How can we prepare ourselves to discern a new face of the Church?

Pilgrims set out in response to a calling, sustained by prayer, to receive what God has prepared — very often something unexpected, something we hardly dared to hope for and which shows us a wider horizon. Pilgrims learn how to recognize God along the way and all that God gives through those we meet. Pilgrims, trusting that Christ goes before them, do not give in to discouragement.

— How can prayer sustain us?
— Some suggestions for bible passages to help us approach the meetings as a pilgrimage that gives direction to our lives: Genesis 12,1-4, Hebrews 11,8-11, Luke 9,58, Matthew 16,24-26, Luke 24,13-35.
— To be a pilgrim means accepting a greater degree of simplicity: being only oneself, without protection, empty-handed. How can we find the trust to undertake this kind of self-giving and openness?
— How can we start over again in times of doubt or discouragement?
— Can we allow something in our life to be transformed by our pilgrimage? What experience have we already had of this?
— How will others be able to see the fruits of what we have discovered by the lives we lead?

Preparing with whom?
See list on page 7

As people who have been sent, whether by a group or by a local church, we are led to forget ourselves, in some way, so as to be witnesses. We accept this responsibility not only before and during the meeting but also on our return. Those who await our return are also waiting for a message from us: the people we will have met in Paris or Madras will be sending us out on mission again—but this time to our home!

— Which bible passages remind us about "being a witness", about "being sent"? Some suggestions: Jeremiah 1,4-9, 2 Corinthians 5,17-20, Luke 10,1-9, Matthew 10,40-42, John 20,19-23.
— What could be suggested to the parish or group as a visible sign of "sending out"? If possible, find something that underlines the universality of the Church, involving people of all ages and from different backgrounds.
— How will you gather and carry the experiences of those who send you out? Try to bring with you to the meeting what lies at the heart of the various local groups who are working to build the Church: the things that make her grow in love and hope. This question can help the local church community become aware of itself: why not arrange a gathering based on this theme inviting all the different local groups?

Going to Madras or Paris is an expression of the desire for greater solidarity between the peoples of the earth. Some people are already deeply committed to such solidarity through support to other countries, projects with the unemployed, cultural minorities, etc. The meetings at the end of the year will lead us to another kind of solidarity: that of visiting and sharing the life of other people.

— In what ways can we live out human solidarity, particularly in terms of sharing material things, both personally and in our local community?
— Does a real solidarity exist in our neighbourhood with old people, the sick, between different communities, with the poor or homeless? What can be undertaken as a further sign of a desire for human solidarity?
— If we want to simplify our way of life, where can we start?
— What ways of continuing will be possible after the meetings, particularly during Lent 1989?

"As you seek to follow Christ Jesus could it be that you find yourself alone cast into a kind of human desert, without anyone with whom you can share the trust of faith? The Risen One comes to wres you away from loneliness by letting yo rely on the trusting of his witnesses, from Mary and the Apostles down to those c the present day."
This part of the Letter from Ethiopia lead us to recognize a new face of the Church

— How can this stage of the pilgrimage c trust be an inward step for me to help m find my place in the life of the Church?
— What is changing in my vision of th communion of the Church?
— How can I try to be attentive to buildin up Christian community, and cast off th things that are sources of division withi and around me?
— In what ways could I change my life i order to follow Christ more nearly?

These personal questions lead us to as ourselves about our local church com munities:
— How can Sunday worship express th life of our parish more fully and be a bon of unity between those who attend?
— What straightforward ways can help u go beyond the compartmentalisation c our local church?
— How can we open ourselves to thos who cannot believe?

EUROPEAN MEETING OF YOUNG ADULTS
30 Dec 88 to 4 Jan 89
Paris
TAIZÉ

Discovering signs of hope

Those beginning to prepare the meeting sometimes are surprised when they read the program: "Where are the signs of hope in our situation? How can we help those we welcome to discover them?

"If many people thus feel at a loss, is that a sign that we are too used to seeing only the problems, the lacks, the needs? In trying to find ways of doing better, of being more efficient in communicating our faith, have we lost a sense of wonder?"

In Paris and the surrounding area, so many people give of themselves generously. And yet some wonder what the results of their commitments are; they fall prey to discouragement or to the impression of being overworked.

It can be essential to help them understand that their life is a source of hope for the others, even for people who come from far away. "I was astonished that this meeting to be held here was called a pilgrimage", said a young man from Paris, "but now I understand that those who come will not only be visiting us. Through the life of our Christian communities, just as they are, they will discover the marvellous things God is accomplishing today."

In the entire region, this search will be a way of anticipating the European meeting itself. For those who will come from throughout Europe, the preparation can be lived out in the same spirit, by accomplishing a great many small pilgrimages, by discovering signs of hope in one's own local situation. On page 2, you will find some questions to inspire this preparation. □

D E T A I L S

Dates: Arrive Friday morning, 30 December 1988 between 7am and 12 noon. Depart mid-afternoon, Wednesday 4 January 1989.

Programme: We shall be welcomed by families and parishes all over Paris. There will be morning prayer locally in the parishes, and the focus of the mornings will be meeting people who are committed to serving others. There will be midday and evening prayer in city-centre churches (Notre-Dame Cathedral, St Sulpice...). During the afternoon, workshops on different themes will be held in city-centre venues.

Accommodation: with families, communities and in church halls. Simple conditions. Bring sleeping-bag and lightweight mattress.

17 to 29 year olds: three different ways of taking part:
— the main group: participation in the life of the parishes of the city.
— the silence group (has its own separate accommodation).
— while still participating in the life of the parishes, helping with practical work for the meeting, or "animation", or music for the common prayers. To do this, arrive, if possible, on December 28 between 8am and 4pm. It is not possible to arrive on Dec. 29.

15 & 16 year olds can only take part if accompanied by a group leader over 20 who stays with them, and all participate in the main group (see above) from 30 December on (do not arrive before).

Adults over 30 all participate in the main group (see above) from 30 December on (do not arrive before). Those who cannot stay in the same simple conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" indicate this on their registration form. Those who are accompanying a group of young people are welcome to stay with them if they will accept the same simple accommodation.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should register directly to Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange suitable accommodation.

Contributions to cost must be made in French Francs and, for groups, preferably by eurocheque or travellers' cheques. The exact cost can only be fixed later but will lie in the following range: For young adults from Ireland: 240-270 Francs, from Britain 270-300 Francs, from Scandinavia 290-320 Francs. Adults over 30 should reckon to contribute double. Those who arrive on December 28 need to contribute 70 Francs more. Your contribution to cost covers all meals during the 6-day meeting and a public transport pass. A solidarity fund will be open in order to support those who are forbidden to take any money out of their own countries. One can contribute to this fund on arrival.

Travel — from Britain: Group travel by coach from London and other cities (also for helpers arriving in Paris on Dec. 28). Book well in advance. Details from: St Peter's Coaches, 4 Penerley Road, LONDON SE6 2LQ. Tel: 01 698 9145 Telex: 268506
— from other countries: write to Taizé for the address of the person who is arranging group travel from your country.

Final date for registrations: 1 December Further details about the meeting will be sent in November to everyone who registers earlier. Address for registration ONLY for those who live outside Britain, all families with children, and those who have special accommodation needs: European Meeting, Taizé Community, 71250 CLUNY, France. Tel: 85.50.18.18

European Meeting Registration Form.
Send in by December 1st either to a contact person (Britain) or (if you live outside Britain) to Taizé.

FIRST NAME :

FAMILY NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Telephone : ..... Occupation : ..... Age : .....

Circle the "yes" or "no" or complete where necessary:

- I will come with a group from the town of .....
led by .....
- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor: I need a bed yes / no
If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):
woman man couple family with ... children disabled person with helper
- I will arrive on 30th December: yes / no (arrival between 7am and 12 noon)
- I will arrive on 28th December (17-30 year olds only): yes / no
to help with *(please circle)*: animation / work / music team

N.B. If, for any reason, you are arranging your own accommodation, please send us the address and, if possible, the name of the parish where you will be staying.

- I would like ..... more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

"Lord, teach us to pray"

Throughout the summer, a Bible group attempted to understand better the Gospel message. Each day began with an introduction followed by silence. During the afternoon, in small groups, the participants shared their discoveries and questions concerning the proposed Bible texts. This year, the reflection was centred on the Lord's Prayer. Here is a part of the first day's introduction.

"Jesus was praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, «Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.»" (Luke 11,1).

In this text, a simple but important fact needs to be mentioned. Jesus prayed. If there was ever someone who was certain of living always in God's presence, of being God's beloved son, it was Jesus. It is all the more striking, then, to realize that during his life on earth, Jesus always took the time to stop and be alone with God in an intimate, personal relationship.

What is the meaning of the disciple's question? The apostles were Jews, and if there were ever people who knew how to pray, it was certainly the Jews. They knew a great many prayers. But here they are asking for something else. They want to learn the prayer of Jesus, to enter into his own particular relationship with God. They want a prayer that in some sense recapitulates his teaching and that corresponds to their identity as his disciples. And Jesus teaches them the Our Father (Luke 11,2-4; Matt 6,9-13).

We can understand, then, why this prayer, the Our Father, has always been considered a summary of the whole Gospel. It is true that when we read it, we may be struck by two things: first of all, its great simplicity—it is almost a child's prayer—and second the fact that almost all the expressions are drawn from Jewish prayers with their roots in the Hebrew Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament. These two facts could keep us from grasping the newness and the force of this prayer.

From another point of view, however, here we have something akin to the mystery of the Incarnation. When Jesus walked along the roads of Palestine 2000 years ago, for many of his contemporaries he was not too different from anyone else. An impressive rabbi, a healer or miracle-worker...but what stood out was undoubtedly his ordinariness: he was a human being like us. Only those who took the time to follow him, in response to a call that touched the depths of their soul, were slowly able to grasp something of his mystery: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!" (Matt 16,16). The same thing can be said of his prayer, the Our Father: only those who take the time to enter more deeply into its mystery can perceive, behind its ordinariness and simplicity, behind the expressions of the time coming from its Jewish background, something unique, a kind of entry into the intimate life of God. That is what we will try to do as we meditate on the phrases of the Lord's Prayer, one after another.

"Our Father in heaven"

If the Lord's Prayer is the recapitulation or summary of the message of Jesus, then the first words are, in their turn, the summary of that prayer. They reveal to us the very heart of the Gospel. First, the word Father. To speak of God—or one of the gods—as a father is something that can be found in many civilizations. In order to speak about the invisible world of the divine, human beings are naturally obliged to borrow images from human life: a father, a mother, a king, a shepherd... It is easy to understand why the word "father" would be applied to God: the divinity is thus seen as the source of life.

In ancient Israel, human images were likewise used to speak of God. At the same time, God's people was always deeply aware that God was the wholly Other, the Incomparable One far beyond all the categories of the human mind. Thus the word "father", which tends to emphasize the close relationship between God and human beings, was used in the Hebrew Scriptures, but with a certain discretion and almost never in prayer.

In the Bible, the image of father does not generally refer to the fact that God is the Creator of the universe, but rather underlines the fact that God formed a people through the event of the Exodus and constantly watches over it (cf. Deut 32,6; Isa 63,16; 64,7; Mal 2,10). The word evokes the special relationship that exists between the Lord and his people, and yet it would be incorrect to say that it is the preferred way of addressing God.

When we turn to the gospels, however, we discover something quite new. Each time Jesus prays in his own words instead of using the prayers of his people, the Psalms (cf. Mark 15,34), he begins with the word "Father". And according to Mark 14,36, we know the exact word Jesus used—the word Abba. At the time of Jesus, there were two Semitic languages in use in Palestine: Hebrew, the language of the Bible and of the liturgy, and Aramaic, the language of everyday life. Now Abba is the Aramaic word for father, and it must have been a bit shocking for the disciples to hear Jesus use such an everyday expression to speak to the living God, the Holy One of Israel; it was, after all, the same word that could be heard on the lips of children playing in the street when they called their father. The word must have struck the hearers, for it is one of the only Aramaic expressions we find in the books of the New Testament.

What did Jesus intend in calling God "Abba" in his prayer? First of all, it is the expression of a unique intimacy or closeness. Certainly, all believing Jews knew that God loved and took care of his chosen people; for them God was not someone far away. But the relationship between Jesus and God was incomparably closer, to the extent that we can speak of a total oneness or communion, a shared life. Later on, when Christians confess that Jesus is the Son of God in a unique way, all they will be doing is making explicit what is already contained in the simple word "Abba". *(Continued on page 7)*

phannine hours

Kings 19,1-12

hannine hours are ggested as a way of seeking d in silence and prayer, in midst of our life at home. ring the course of the day (if ssible, two days in the same ek) take a couple of hours read the Bible passages h the short commentary d to reflect on the questions ich follow. Afterwards, the up (3 to 10 people) meet ether to share what they ve discovered and perhaps a time of prayer.

hese verses tell of a turning-int in the life of the prophet ijah. The prophet had just been torious in a bitter combat with s adversaries. To do this, he had give himself to the end and risk erything, trusting in God. But en, when the queen threatens m with death, suddenly Elijah eaks down. He runs away and des in the desert. Convinced of s worthlessness, he wishes only e die.

t that moment God's miracle kes place. Twice, a divine mes-nger wakes him up and gives m to eat and to drink. As for the raelites on the road to the Prom-d Land, God takes care of his osen one when, humanly eaking, he is at the end of his pe. Elijah is thus enabled to set t on the road again and ourished by this food, he alked for forty days and forty ghts till he reached the moun-in of God."

ecause of this discovery of his n limits and of God's love for m, a love beyond anything he agined, Elijah's life is deeply ansformed. He becomes able to scern God's voice in a gentle eeze, a "breath of silence". He as understood: God's victories ave nothing in common with the wers of this world. God's de-gns are accomplished in discre-on, and even in human weak-ess; faithfulness at all costs is ore important than exploits that e as spectacular as they are ort-lived.

here in my life do I encounter e desert, in other words times r places where I feel the need for od more strongly?
ow does God nourish me? What upport does God give me for my ilgrimage in trust?
ow can we hear the "breath of lence" by which God communi-ates with us?
ave human disappointments ver been for me a stepping-tone to a deeper relationship ith God?

November

Meditating on the Word

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 Tue — Rv 7.2-4,9-14; 1 Jn 3.1-3
ALL SAINTS
Jesus said: Blessed are you when people falsely say all kinds of things against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; it is in the same way that they persecuted the prophets before you. **Mt 5.1-12**

2 Wed — 2 Co 4.6-12; Mt 23.37-39
God created human beings in his image; he has placed his light in their hearts. **Si 17.1-12**

3 Thu — Si 18.8-13; 2 Co 4.13-18
Jesus said to his disciples: You will be handed over, but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world. **Mt 24.4-6,9-14**

4 Fri — Si 28.2-7; Mt 24.23-27,32-36
We are full of trust, although we know that while we are living in the body we are exiled from the Lord; we advance by faith, not by sight. **2 Co 5.1-7**

5 Sat — Mt 24.42-47
Trick the cares that weigh upon you, console your heart, chase sorrow far away, for sorrow is no use to anybody. **Si 30.21-23**

6 SUN — 1 K 17.10-16; Heb 9.24-28
Jesus saw a poor widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed." **Mk 12.41-44**

7 Mon — 2 Co 5.11-15; Mt 25.1-13
The eyes of the Lord keep watch over those who love him. He revives the spirit and gives light to the eyes. He gives healing, life and blessing. **Si 34.12-17**

8 Tue — Si 35.17-24; Mt 25.14-28
Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. **2 Co 5.16-21**

9 Wed — Zp 3.9-13; 2 Co 6.1-10
Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. **Mt 25.34-40**

10 Thu — 2 Co 7.5-7; Mt 26.1-13
Your God is with you. He will quiet you with his love, he will dance with joy for you. **Zp 3.14-18**

11 Fri — Zc 2.14-17; Lk 14.7-11
Paul writes of the first Christian communities: Throughout ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and extreme poverty overflowed in rich generosity. **2 Co 8.1-5**

12 Sat — Zc 8.4-8; **Lk 14.12-14**
The one who finds his joy in God's law is like a tree planted by the water, which bears its fruit in season and whose leaves never wither. Ps 1

13 SUN — Ezk 34.11-12,15-17; Mk 13.24-32
The Lord says: I will put my laws in their hearts and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and wrongdoings I will remember no more. **Heb 10.11-18**

14 Mon — 2 Co 8.7-15; Lk 14.15-23
The Lord says: Speak the truth to one another. At your gates, administer true judgement conducive to peace. **Zc 8.13-17**

15 Tue — Zc 9.9-10; 2 Co 9.6-10,15
Jesus said: Anyone who comes to me without preferring me to his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple. **Lk 14.25-33**

16 Wed — Zc 12.10, 13.1 Lk 14.34-35; **2 Co 11.21-31**
Many keep saying, "Who will give us happiness?" Lord, let the light of your face shine upon us. Ps 4

17 Thu — Zc 14.5c-9; Lk 15.1-10
Paul writes: God said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. **2 Co 12.7-10**

18 Fri — Ml 2.10; 2 Co 13.4-13
Coming to his senses, the prodigal son said: I will leave this place and go to my Father and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son." But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. **Lk 15.11-24**

19 Sat — Ba 3.24-38; **Lk 15.25-32**
At daybreak, Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning I offer my prayer and fix my eyes on you. Ps 5

20 SUN — Dn 7.13-14; Rv 1.5-8
Jesus said to Pilate: I came into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me. **Jn 18.33-37**

21 Mon — Rv 1.17-18; Lk 16.10-16
The Lord says to his people: Look and see the joy that is coming to you from God. **Ba 4.36-5.4**

22 Tue — Ba 5.7-9; Rv 2.1-7
Jesus said: If your brother wrongs you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent", forgive him. **Lk 17.3-6**

23 Wed — Rv 2.8-10; Lk 17.7-10
The Lord said to Jeremiah: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and consecrated you. **Jr 1.4-10**

24 Thu — Jr 1.11-12,17-19; Rv 3.7-12
To the Samaritan who returned to tahnk Jesus for healing him, Jesus said: Rise and go. Your faith has saved you. **Lk 17.11-19**

25 Fri — Jr 2.1-5; Rv 14.6-7,12-13
Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you. **Lk 17.20-25**

26 Sat — Lk 18.1-8
The Lord said of his people: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water, and have dug themselves cracked cisterns that will not hold water. **Jr 2.10-13**

27 SUN — Jr 33.14-16; Lk 21.25-28,34-36
ADVENT
May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May he confirm your hearts. **1 Th 3.12-4.2**

28 Mon — Jr 3.12-17; Rv 21.1-4
In a parable, Jesus said that the one who prayed saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner", went home justified. **Lk 18.9-14**

29 Tue — Jr 6.14-16; Lk 18.15-17
God says: I am the Beginning and the End. I shall give water from the well of life freely to anyone who is thirsty. **Rv 21.5-7**

30 Wed — Mt 4.18-22; Lk 18.18-27
St ANDREW
Paul says: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him. **Rm 10.9-18**

Meditating on the Word

December

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 Thu Jr 7.1-7 Rv 21.10-11,22-25
Jesus said: There is no one who has left house, wife, brothers, parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times as much in this age and, in the world to come, eternal life. **Lk 18.28-34**

2 Fri Is 1.2-3,16-18 Rv 22.1-5,8-9
Jesus said to a blind man: Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you. And instantly his sight returned and he followed Jesus, glorifying God. **Lk 18.35-43**

3 Sat Is 2.2-5
Jesus said: The Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost. **Lk 19.1-10**

4 SUN Ba 5.1-9 Lk 3.1-6
I am confident that the One who began a good work in you will go on completing it until the day of Christ Jesus comes. **Ph 1.4-6,8-11**

5 Mon Is 4.2-6 Lk 19.28-40
Ph 1.12-19
Lord our God, how great is your name in all the earth. May your glory be sung by the mouths of children and babes in arms. Ps 1-30

6 Tue Is 5.1-4 Lk 1.1-10
Paul writes: For me, to live is Christ. **Ph 1.20-26**

7 Wed Ph 1.27-30 Lk 1.11-25
In a vision, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord say, "Whom shall I send?" And he answered, "Here I am, send me." **Is 6.1-8**

8 Thu Is 7.10-14 Ph 2.1-5
The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **Lk 1.26-38**

9 Fri Lk 19.41-42,45-48
Ph 2.5-11
Isaiah said: When he laid his hand upon me, God told me, "Do not fear all that people fear. Do not be afraid. I am the one whom you are to regard as holy." Is 8.11-18

10 Sat Lk 20.9-19
Isaiah said: God's Spirit will be upon the Messiah. He will not judge by appearances, but he will judge the weak with justice and give fair sentence for the humble in the land. **Is 11.1-4**

11 SUN Zp 3.14-18 Lk 3.10-18
Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! **Ph 4.4-7**

12 Mon Ph 2.12-18 Lk 20.20-26
Isaiah said: On that day there shall be no more hurt or violence, for the land will be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the bottom of the sea. **Is 11.5-9**

13 Tue Is 12.2-6 Lk 21.1-4
For Christ I have accepted the loss of all other things — I look on them as rubbish so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ. **Ph 3.1-9**

14 Wed Is 25.1,3-5 Lk 21.8-19
Paul writes: I do not consider that I have already made it, but forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal. **Ph 3.10-16**

15 Thu Is 25.6-9 Lk 21.29-36
Paul writes: Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure our lowly bodies into the likeness of his glorious body. **Ph 3.17-4.1**

16 Fri Is 26.4-13 Ph 4.8-14
Jesus said to his disciples: Who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet I am among you as one who serves. **Lk 22.24-27**

17 Sat Lk 22.28-34
The Lord says: See, I am laying a foundation stone for my people. And I will take justice for a measure and righteousness as a level. **Is 28.16-17**

18 SUN Mi 5.1-4 Heb 10.5-10
Elizabeth said to Mary: Blessed is she who believed that the promise the Lord made her would be fulfilled. **Lk 1.39-45**

19 Mon Is 29.18-23 Lk 1.46-55
God's promises have been given us so that we may share the very nature of God. **2 P 1.1-4**

20 Tue Is 30.15-18 Lk 1.56-66
Seek perseverance, true devotion, brotherly kindness and love. If you live with these things, they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **2 P 1.5-11**

21 Wed Is 30.19-21,26 Lk 1.67-80
You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. **2 P 1.17-21**

22 Thu Is 32.15-20 2 P 3.3-4,8-9
John writes: The light shines in the darkness, and darkness could not overpower it. **Jn 1.1-5**

23 Fri Is 35.1-4 Jn 1.6-9
Relying on God's promise, we are looking towards a new heaven and a new earth where justice will dwell. **2 P 3.13-18**

24 Sat Is 62.1-5 Mt 1.18-25
In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets in many different ways. But in our time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son. **Heb 1.1-6**

25 SUN Is 9.1-6 Tt 2.11-14 Is 62.11-12 Tt 3.4-7
CHRISTMAS
When they had seen Jesus, the shepherds made known what they had been told concerning him and everyone who heard was astonished. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **Lk 2.1-20**

26 Mon Is 35.5-10 Ac 7.55-60
St STEPHEN
The Word was in the world and, though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. But to all who accepted him he gave the right to become children of God. **Jn 1.9-13**

27 Tue Is 52.7-10 Jn 1.14-18
St JOHN
God is light, in him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we are in communion with one another. **1 Jn 1.1-7**

28 Wed Dt 30.11-14 Jn 15.9-12
Even if I can understand all mysteries and know all things, even if I have the faith to move mountains, if I am without love I am nothing. **1 Co 13.1-3**

29 Thu 1 P 1.6-8 Jn 20.19-23a
Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. **Pr 4.23,25-27**

30 Fri Lm 3.55-58 Jn 14.23,26-27
Paul writes: In Christ, all the fullness of God lives in bodily form, and in him you too find fulfilment. **Col 2.9-10a**

31 Sat Jr 20.8-9 Heb 12.1-2
Jesus said: Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge and you will not be judged. **Lk 6.36-38**

Johannine hours

Philippians 3,4-14

What is the source of our confidence? Where is the foundation of our identity? For the apostle Paul before his encounter with Christ, the response to these questions would have been typical of most of us: a series of acquisitions resulting either from birth or from personal choices. In the course of his life, Paul had constructed an apparently irreproachable personality, worthy of esteem in the eyes of others and (why not?) of God.

But one day, the Risen Christ burst into his life. From then on nothing was the same. His personal qualities appeared to him not only as worthless but even as negative, not because they were bad in themselves but because they had been a barrier between himself and God. They had led him to place his confidence in himself rather than turning to God.

From then on, what mattered above all for Paul was a living relationship with Jesus Christ. A relationship in which the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of Christ, became translated into the concrete circumstances of his life. Rooted in the force of God liberated in the resurrection of Jesus, Paul became able to share the burdens of others and thus participate in the suffering of Christ. His life became a pilgrimage, or even a race. Christ is both the starting-point and the goal of this race; his simple presence is a call to set out. He frees us from being obsessed with our own situation, from the need to strive for a personal perfection. For the disciple of Christ, the only perfection possible consists in running in his footsteps (cf. He 12,1-2), forgetting oneself and one's past, fully open to God in the present moment.

If I had to compose a list such as that in vv. 5-6, what would I put in it? How can we see our personal qualities or accomplishments as gifts of God to be brought to fulfillment rather than as reasons for human glory?
Where does the paschal mystery manifest itself in my life? How do I root myself in the resurrection of Christ? How do I share in his sufferings?
How does the image of the race help me to understand the Gospel?

(ntinued from page 4) Secondly, the use of the word bba" is a mark of trust, of filial love, as we see in little ldren who turn toward their father or mother when they counter the least difficulty. Calling God Abba means seeing him someone who is always there to accompany and to sus- n us, especially in times of difficulty (cf. Mark 9,14-15).

o fundamental passages of Saint Paul will help us go a step ther. In Galatians 4,3-7 and Romans 8,14-17, Paul de- ibes what being a Christian means. It means changing from e condition of a slave to that of a son (or daughter), in other rds becoming a member of the family. To put it another y, it means crossing over from a relationship with God sed on fear to one based on trust. And Paul sees this change t as the result of our own activity but as God's own work in through Jesus, his Son. In and through the Son, we become ns and daughters of God. In other words, by his life, death d resurrection, Christ enables us to enter into the very same lationship he has with God. He does this, continues Saint ul, by sending his Spirit into our hearts, this Spirit who cries t in us "Abba, Father!"

eing able to call God "Father", then, means attesting that sus brings us into a brand-new relationship with God, and it so means expressing this relationship with the word Jesus ve us. It means expressing our faith in a God who is a source trust, who is always there for us and who wants us to have e in fullness (cf. John 10,10). But when we say "Father", e must immediately add the word "our". This other simple ord likewise points to a basic truth of the Gospel, namely at the new relationship with God implies at the same time a ew relationship among human beings. Henceforth we are no nger alone; we belong to a community. No individualistic lationship is possible with the God of Jesus Christ. Entering to a new relationship with God through Jesus means at the ame time finding ourselves united to all those who are on the me road. In other words, the love of God and the love of ur neighbour are shown to be two sides of one and the same eality.

inally, we encounter the expression "in heaven". This is a ypically Jewish expression, and it does not mean that God is ar away. The expression indicates the fact that, even when ve call him "Father", God remains the Other; he is not iden- ical with a human father. Of course, our image of God is ormed in part from our human experiences. A person who as never known an authentic human love will certainly find t very hard to understand God's love for him or her. And et, it is vital to realize that God's love is far beyond any uman analogy, and this is even truer if our human experience f fatherhood has been an incomplete or negative one. In the inal analysis, we can understand the words "Our Father" cor- ectly not on the basis of our own personal experiences but nly by looking at Jesus in the gospels and by discovering his elationship with God. The Lord's Prayer is based not on ome kind of human image of fatherhood but on a concrete, iving relationship between Jesus and the One he called "Abba". Through Christ, this utterly unique relationship be- comes accessible to us. By saying yes to him, we enter into the communion of the Trinity. That is why, in the first cen- turies, the Our Father was one of the last things those who asked for baptism were taught, and they recited it for the first time after their baptism, during the Holy Saturday liturgy, to mark the new stage that was beginning, the new relationship with God into which they had just entered. ■

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contact addresses for the next steps of the pilgrimage of trust and to prepare for the European Meeting in Paris by visits, gatherings, reflection in small groups, etc.

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Listening to the CONTINENTS

Bolivia

During one of the intercontinental meetings, a young woman from Bolivia spoke about her experience:

"I began to work at the age of thirteen for the Ministry of Labour. Following the coup d'état, I worked for the miners' trade union, which is very influential in the country. But for the last five years, the mines have only been taking young people between 13 and 17 years old, with no formation or organization. The trade-union movement has thus lost its impact, and I lost my job.

"Three years ago, I met a priest for my first communion who told me about the Young Christian Workers. Our new bishop suggested that I live in community with others, and that I help set up groups, especially in the countryside, since I speak Quechuac. I also helped to start up the YCW again by inviting the new miners who replaced their fathers who are out of work and who have become the sole support of their families. When I was told about God, I was unable to listen because I could not understand how He permitted so many injustices and why He asked us to forgive those who have hurt us or to give our life for those we love.

"During the visit of Pope John Paul II, I found myself in front of the television, weeping because of what was missing in my heart without really knowing what it was. So I began to listen to my bishop who told me to look at the beauty in the world. And since he had come to Taizé recently, I accepted the invitation to take part in the intercontinental meetings. I let myself be convinced because I felt the need to discover that inner world I hardly knew anything about. When I return, what I will try to give, more than always organizing things, will be that love that impels me, because of the Gospel, to want to give my life for those I love." ■

Madras

During the summer, preparations for the intercontinental meeting in Madras deepened in several ways: already in each region, regular gatherings began to be held. Young Europeans were able to come in the summer rather than in December to meet with young Indians, and then to share their discoveries back home. By twos, they visited the following regions: Bihar, Orissa, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Andra Pradesh, Karnataka, Calcutta.

Two Italian girls were in Madhya Pradesh. "Our visit was so well prepared that everywhere we were welcomed as in our own family. The visits to the different groups revealed great expectations. Their witness stimulates us in our pilgrimage now when we return home, because they taught us a spirit of hospitality and trust."

The Indians who took part in the meetings in Taizé came from every region and from different churches. All were able to share their experiences with joy and simplicity, by participating in the discussion groups, by witnessing as well through song and dance.

Because of their witness, young Europeans came closer to India, and those who will go to Madras were able to begin preparing already. Finally, through many visits to parishes in different European countries — Italy, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Switzerland — the young Indians experienced the type of pilgrimage of trust that consists in going two by two to encounter Christian communities.

In Madras too preparations are going forward and already, during monthly meetings for the entire city, visits to places of hope are taking place: in the slums, to schools for the blind, homes for the mentally handicapped, for the sick. The fifty parishes of the city will be happy to welcome all the participants at the end of the year! ■

Philippines

We, all of us, can bring the love of Jesus to others and become a ferment of reconciliation

Mary, Mother of Reconciliations

Mother Teresa of Calcutta
and
Brother Roger of Taizé

not only among believers but in the entire human family...And Mary will be for us "mother of reconciliations".

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Brazil

Many young Brazilians came to Taizé t summer, in particular from the region Sao Paolo. A couple who were in Taizé l year recently wrote:

"The isolation in this region of Amazo is sometimes stifling. For us it is a radi change of cultures and of styles of co munity life. Like most of the new arriva we wanted to change things very quick but the projects have to be adapted to t abilities and the limits of the people volved. We are being a bit forced to lea patience and serenity.

"I work in school in the morning and w a health team in the afternoon with m wife. We are trying above all to work preventing disease and to train people take care of their health better. There a health workers who do a wonderful jo They are women who are supported Church communities. They are almost ill erate, but are able to accomplish a gre deal because of their generosity and t folk wisdom they have inherited. The gre distances make the work more difficu The rivers are the only means of commu cation. Once we visited a village seve teen hours away by boat from the city.

"Since we came back from Taizé, o prayer has become stronger and more co stant. So that all our activities do n drown us, we have set up a simple pray corner in the single room in which w live."

Letter from Taizé

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